DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 211 173 JC 820 050

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TITLE Academic Survival Skills. The Career Life Assessment Skills Series, Booklet Five. A Program to Meet Adult Developmental Needs.
INSTITUTION Northern Virginia Community Coll., Alexandria.
SPONS AGENCY Virginia State Dept. of Education, Richmond.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 42p.; Conducted as part of the Vocational Guidance and Counseling Project under the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976. For related documents, see JC 820 046-820 052.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Students; College Choice; College Credits; Essay Tests; Family Life; Higher Education; Memory; Nontraditional Education; Objective Tests; Problem Solving; Reading Improvement; *Reentry Students; Student Educational Objectives; Student Needs; *Study Skills; *Success; Test Anxiety; Test Wiseness; Textbooks; Vocabulary Development
IDENTIFIERS Notetaking; Procrastination; Time Management

ABSTRACT

As part of a series on career and life planning for adults, this booklet examines strategies and academic skills that can help reentry adult students. Part I discusses factors to be considered in planning a return to school: determining the motivation for returning, choosing an appropriate educational program, investigating nontraditional methods of earning college credit, applying to and getting started at the school, enlisting the support of family members, developing self-confidence, and seeking appropriate counseling. Exercises and charts on time management in Part II help the reader to clarify immediate and long-range goals, define priorities, develop a realistic weekly schedule, accommodate unforeseen disruptive problems, and avoid procrastination. Parts III and IV provide hints to improve reading skills, expand vocabulary, and approach textbook materials. Finally, Parts V through VIII provide guidelines to: (1) prepare for class, take notes, and study notes after class; (2) identify factors that block and improve study concentration; (3) identify the reasons why people forget and the ways to improve memory; and (4) prepare for a test, deal with test anxiety, and take objective, essay, and problem-solving tests. Finally, Part IX presents an 81-item bibliography of relevant information resources. (HB/JP)

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ACADEMIC SURVIVAL SKILLS

Booklet Five

The Career Life Assessment Skills Series

A Program to Meet Adult Developmental Needs

Bernadette M. Curtin
Fred J. Hecklinger

Project Directors

Vocational Guidance and Counseling Project

Conducted Under

Vocational Education Amendments of 1976

Public Law 94-482

1981

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JC820050

The Project Directors would like to express their appreciation to the following staff members at the Alexandria Campus for their contributions to this booklet.

Ms. Janet Kreachbaum

Layout and Production

Ms. Adele Hight

Resource Materials

Ms. Mary Dumont

Ms. Eva Marie Irrera

Artwork

The Career Life Assessment Skills Series
(CLASS)

This series consists of eight booklets which can be used in conjunction with the CLASS workshops or by themselves. The following topics are covered in the series.

BOOKLET ONE — YOUR UNIQUE SELF

This booklet helps you to look at your interests, skills, values, work values, and lifestyle preferences.

BOOKLET TWO — JOB MARKET INVESTIGATION

This booklet helps you to research careers, to identify possible new careers that may interest you, and to make effective decisions.

BOOKLET THREE — JOB CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES

This booklet helps you learn how to find a job, to know how to handle an interview, to write a resume, and to conduct an effective job search.

BOOKLET FOUR — THE FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT PROCESS

This booklet helps you to understand the federal employment process and outlines the best ways to look for a job with the federal government.

BOOKLET FIVE — ACADEMIC SURVIVAL SKILLS

This booklet helps you to deal with some of the learning skills needed to be successful when returning to school.

BOOKLET SIX — MID-LIFE AND CAREER TRANSITIONS

This booklet helps you to understand what kind of career and life changes people go through and to evaluate your own needs for change.

BOOKLET SEVEN — JOB-KEEPING AND REVITALIZATION

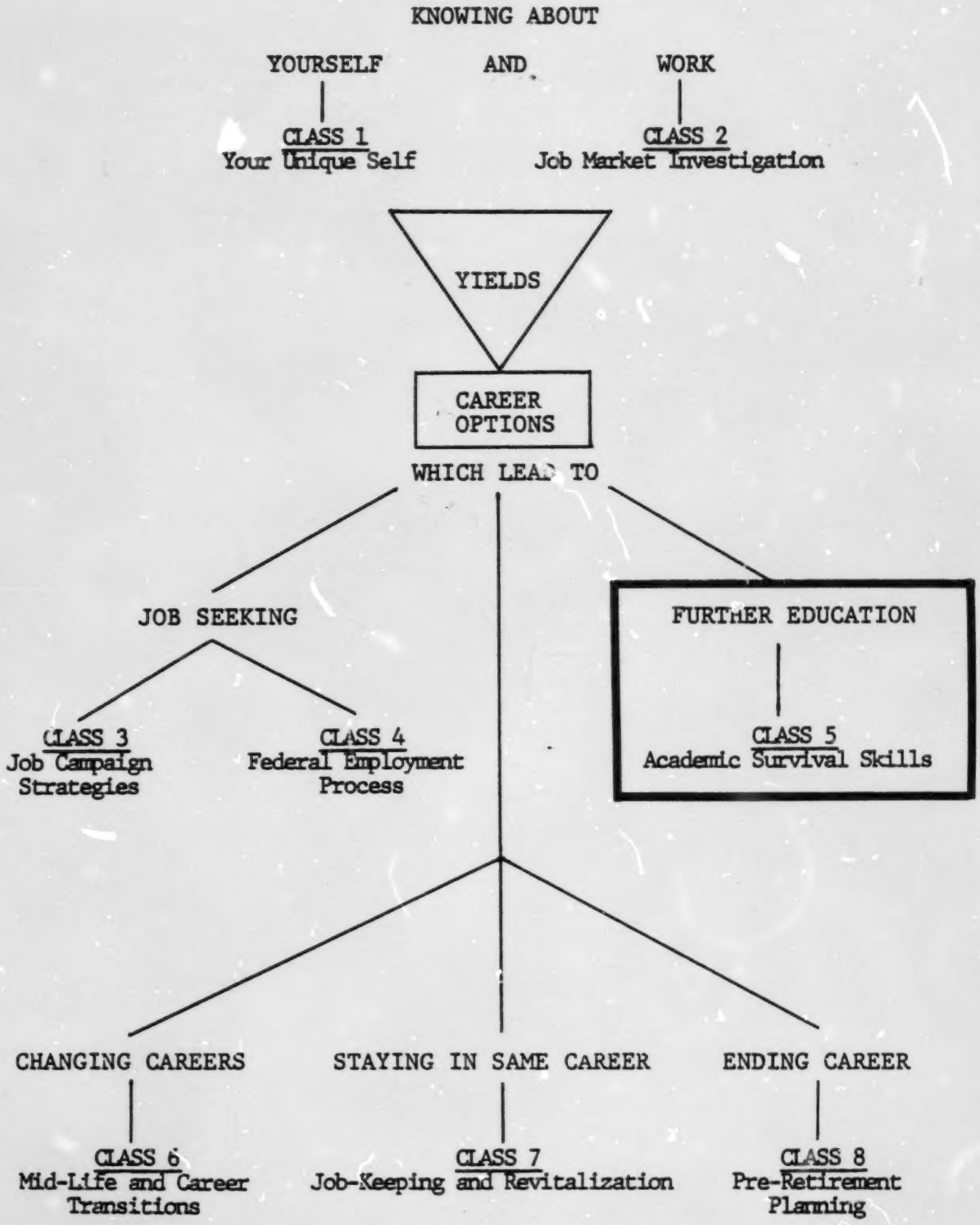
This booklet helps you to maintain your effectiveness and interest in your current job and suggests ways that you can breathe new life into your job.

BOOKLET EIGHT — PRE-RETIREMENT PLANNING

This booklet helps you to look at the important issues involved in planning for your retirement and gives you guidelines on how to get started with this process.

CAREER LIFE ASSESSMENT SKILLS SERIES

C.L.A.S.S.



CAREER LIFE PLANNING

Career life planning is a continual process of assessing where you are headed in your life and career and of deciding whether or not you wish to make changes. In order to make these life and career decisions, it is important that you know about three distinct but essential areas:

- Yourself, which involves taking an inventory of your
  - --interests
  - --skills and abilities
  - --work values
  - --personal values
  - --temperament
  - --personality traits
  - --lifestyle preference
- The world of work, which involves the evaluation of your own career, if you have one, and other potential careers through
  - --research
  - --experience
  - --informational interviewing
  - --decision-making
  - --job revitalization
- Other opportunities not necessarily connected with work that may help you to change your lifestyle, such as
  - --education
  - --leisure activities
  - --community service
  - --retirement planning

After an in-depth look at your own goals and lifestyle preferences and a comprehensive evaluation of the career change and other options open to you, you will then be ready to make an effective decision.

Making a life or career decision is a big step. At this juncture, you will want to set up a plan to carry out your decision. This might include some of the following short-term goals:

- Obtain more specific training or "brush-up" work on a skill.
- Make some changes in your present job that will increase your job satisfaction.
- Up-date your resume.
- Make changes in your lifestyle.
- Improve your interviewing style.
- Return to school.
- Investigate other job opportunities.
- Become involved in community activities that interest you.
- Plan a second career to enter in a few years.
- Plan for your retirement.

The short-term goals that you establish for yourself will eventually help you to make the changes that you feel are appropriate to fulfill your life and career plans. It is only through planning, evaluating, investigating, reviewing, and decision-making that you can begin to put the career planning process to work for you.

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ACADEMIC SURVIVAL SKILLS

Booklet Five

Career Life Assessment Skills Series

(CLASS)

Introduction

The 1980s have been called the decade of the adult learner. The average age of college students is expected to increase significantly during this period as more and more adults return to school. Education beyond high school is no longer the exclusive privilege of a small percentage of the population. The increase in the number and size of institutions of higher education, and particularly community colleges with their open-door admissions policies, has brought higher education to almost anyone who wants it. It was once a common belief that if you went to college and left before finishing, it would be very unlikely that you would be able to return. This is not at all true in the 1980s, as people enter college, take time off for work or family responsibilities, return, leave again for a while, and return again. Others work steadily on a part-time basis and may take six or eight years to earn an associate's or bachelor's degree. Others study full-time, but also must work part-time to help support themselves. There are many different reasons for returning to school, so it is important for you to evaluate why you want to renew your education and what you hope to get out of it.

This booklet is designed to help you to be successful in your academic work. Whether you have been in high school or college recently, or whether you are returning to school after a long absence, it can be useful to develop some good study skills. You can also work on managing your time, particularly if you are adding academic work to an already busy schedule including your job and family responsibilities. You may be unsure of your test-taking skills and your ability to hold your own in a classroom with other students. This booklet will help you to deal with some of the anxiety that you may be experiencing. While several topics will be covered, this booklet is designed to give you an overview of academic survival skills. If you wish to learn more about a specific topic, please check the references listed in the back of this booklet.

I. RETURNING TO SCHOOL

If it has been several years since you last were in school, or even if it hasn't been all that long, there are some concerns that you might have about returning to school. You may be uneasy about participating in classes where you feel most of the students will be younger than you. It may be difficult for you to see where your class and study time will fit into an already busy schedule. You may be worried about your ability to do academic work. You may be wondering whether returning to school is really the "right" thing for you to be doing at this time. You may be receiving conflicting messages from members of your family regarding your decision to return to school. You may be wondering to whom you can turn for help. The following information may assist you in dealing with these and other concerns.

A. Why do you want to return to school?

There are many reasons for returning to school, and it is important to evaluate your motivation for doing so. Some of the needs you can fulfill through additional education are:

- To obtain new job skills and a degree.
- To obtain general education in preparation for a higher degree.
- To obtain specific skills that will help you to change jobs.
- To refresh your knowledge in certain areas.
- To get some skills in a short period of time so that you can get a job quickly.
- To learn just for fun.
- To increase your knowledge about yourself.
- To meet the challenge of learning and being successful at it.
- To be exposed to new ideas and new people.
- To gain a liberal arts education.

You may have more than one of these needs in mind when returning to school. What is important is to look at your own reasons for seeking additional education and then to choose the type of educational program that will best suit your needs. In the space below, write your reasons for returning to school at this time.

B. Types of educational programs

There are several kinds of educational institutions that you should consider. The following list gives examples of what each type of institution can be expected to offer you.

1) Universities - These have graduate programs and can provide additional training in professional areas beyond the bachelor's degree. Professional careers in law, medicine, social service, and the sciences often require graduate (master's or doctoral) degrees.

2) Colleges - These institutions, along with universities, offer bachelor's degree programs. If you wish to be able to move up in an organization or to have access to certain jobs, it is often essential that you have a bachelor's degree. This is often true in the field of education and in some levels of business.

3) Community and Junior Colleges - These institutions offer associate's degrees in two basic areas. One type of degree is designed to help you transfer to a bachelor's degree program and consists primarily of general, liberal arts courses. The other type of degree is practically-oriented to provide you with job skills. Other programs offer certificates in specialized job areas and individual courses for increased knowledge and self-improvement.

4) Specialized trade, technical, and business schools - These institutions offer specific short-term training in fields such as secretarial work, computer operations, and electronics. They normally have a different type of accreditation than do community colleges, colleges and universities.

5) Apprenticeships - These programs are usually run by trade unions and prepare you by having you do the work as an apprentice, supplemented by some formal instruction.

Most college libraries have resource materials on colleges, universities, trade schools, and other training programs. Before you decide on what kind of school to attend, check out carefully the type of education provided, the cost, the accreditation of the institution, and the potential for giving you what you want. For example, if you hope to learn job skills quickly, find out what kind of a record the school has in preparing people for jobs in the area of your interest.

C. Special ways to earn college credit

There are some non-traditional methods for earning college credit that may be of interest to you if you would like to move quickly through certain course requirements or need maximum time flexibility.

1) CLEP - This program allows you to take tests (for a fee) and to earn college credit for a satisfactory score. The amount of credit granted varies greatly from college to college.

2) Extended Learning - Some colleges have programs of home study which would allow you to complete some courses without attending class.

3) External Degrees - Some colleges have complete degree programs that can be done primarily at home with periodic trips to the campus or to a selected location in your area.

4) Credit for work experience - Some colleges evaluate your work experience and can give you credit for it. This may require you to demonstrate proficiency by exam or to provide records of your experience.

5) Special ways to study - Some colleges offer weekend courses, others offer courses close to your home, others even offer them on commuter trains. In all cases, the purpose is to make the courses more accessible to you.

There are many other types of special programs too numerous to describe here. Check a local public or college library for information on these programs and then evaluate which, if any, would be of value to you.

D. Getting started

Once you have decided on the school you plan to attend, apply well in advance of the beginning of classes and follow these recommended steps.

1) Speak with a counselor at the school about the programs available. Set up a plan for your own particular needs.

2) Take proficiency tests to evaluate your reading and writing skills. If either are weak, take review courses, if available. These are important skills and by working on them you can increase your opportunity for success. Do the same with math, if that subject is required in your program.

3) Choose courses that will interest you, but don't overload yourself at the beginning. Register early so that you will have the best selection of class times.

4) Plan a realistic schedule for yourself. This will be covered in more detail in section two of this booklet.

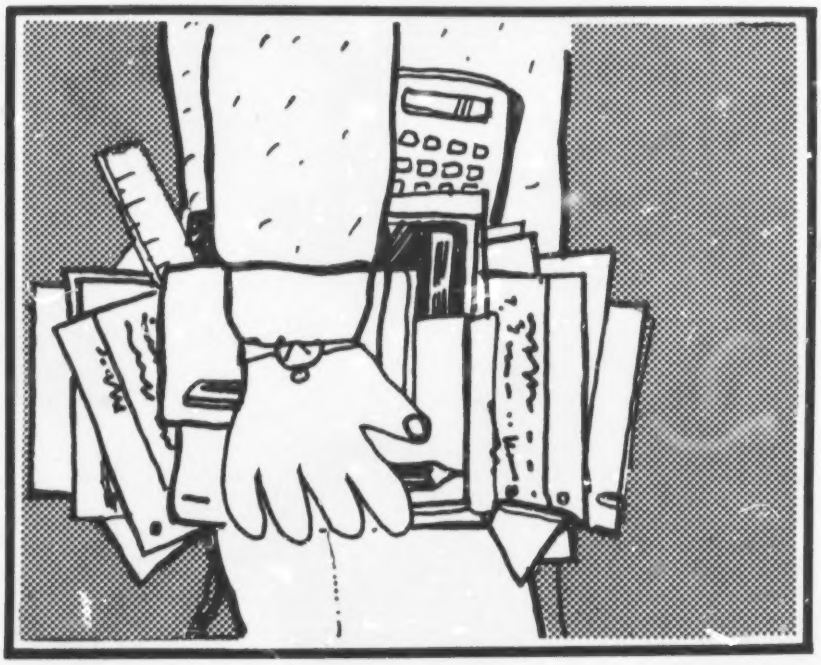
5) Familiarize yourself with the school. Tour the library, learning laboratory and career resource center. Check on counseling, financial aid, and other services. Know where the administrative offices are and where to get information. Check out these things before the first day of classes.

E. Get your family ready

If you have a family, work out a plan for enlisting their support of your return to school. Help them to understand why you are doing this and how important it is to you. Talk it over in detail before you begin. While you can try to work out a class and study schedule that does not conflict with family or work responsibilities, this may not always be possible. Arrange for other family members to share responsibilities when you cannot be around. Encourage communication and make adjustments when necessary. When planning your schedule, make sure that you do leave time for family needs and for relaxed time with your family. Bring family members to your school so they can see first hand where you will be. If you have small children, check to see if your school has a child care center.

F. Have confidence in yourself

If you have been out of school for some time, you may be a bit anxious about your first class meetings. Remember that there are probably several others in the class who have the same concerns as you. Forget everything you may have heard about your mental abilities decreasing with age. It simply is not true. You actually have an advantage because you know what your motivation is to come to school and you have a lot of worthwhile life experience. Get to know some other people in your class. You can learn from them and gain support. Get to know your instructor. Your instructor wants you to learn and is usually very willing to help. Ask questions if you do not understand points made in class or assignments. Treat this experience as an opportunity to learn new information and to meet new people, and you have as much right to be there and to contribute as anyone else.



G. Seek out helpers

If you experience difficulty of any kind, do not be reluctant to ask for assistance. Counselors are available to help you clarify your problems and to make plans to deal with them. Common interest and support groups are often available. If you need help in deciding on the direction you wish to take, counseling is available, as well as courses and workshops on life and career planning and decision-making. Other sources of support can come from fellow students, instructors, family, and friends. The college health service can also provide assistance. Financial aid services can help with many problems. Libraries can help with researching for a term paper. A tutorial service can help you to understand certain subject material that is difficult for you. A student activities office can help you to become involved in the workings of the college, if you are interested and have the time. A job referral service can help you to change jobs or find a job, depending on your needs.

II. TIME MANAGEMENT

You probably have many things competing for your time. You may have a job, family responsibilities, chores around the house and leisure activities as well as your academic work. You also have to eat and sleep. Sometimes you may wonder where your time has gone on a certain evening as the hour approaches midnight. You may also wonder how you will ever do all that you have to get done within a given amount of time. It is important to realize that you have a great deal of control over when and how you do things. By planning your time, setting priorities, and developing a realistic schedule, you can feel more in control of your time and your life. You can also fulfill your responsibilities in a more effective way and reduce the possibility of putting yourself in a stressful situation. The following are suggestions on how to manage your time:

- Develop goals
- Set priorities
- Make a schedule

A. Goals

What do you want to achieve? Why are you in school? What changes in your life do you wish to make?

1) Lifetime goals - In the space below, write as many lifetime goals as you can think of in two minutes.

2) Goals for the next year - List the goals you want to achieve in the next year.

3) Goals for the next month - List the goals you want to achieve in the next month.

4) Now you have three lists of goals. In the space below, list what you have done in the past week toward accomplishing these goals.

5) In terms of the goals you wish to achieve, are you using your time in the way that is best for you? If not, in what ways do you seem to be "wasting" time?

B. Priorities

It is important for you to determine what parts of your life take priority and work your time around these. For example, if you have definite time requirements, such as work and class hours, use these as a base to begin scheduling your time. If certain parts of your life are very important to you, such as time with your family or your favorite sport, try to manage your schedule so that you leave time for these. If you neglect things which are a high priority to you, this can easily cause frustration and conflict in your life.

List below some of your priorities for how you spend your time and how you plan to achieve your goals.

C. Schedule

Now work on developing a schedule of your activities for next week. Be realistic in setting a schedule that you feel you can live with. Some of the activities to include in your schedule are:

Grocery shopping and errands
Commuting time and carpooling
Meal preparation, sewing, and cleaning
Work
Classes
Study time
Recreation and hobbies
Family time
Household chores
Sleep

It is also wise to leave a few peaceful minutes each day for planning, and some flexible, unscheduled time to take care of unforeseen responsibilities or situations. Look at the following sample schedules and make your own on the schedule sheet provided. Try to live with this schedule, and then adjust it accordingly for the following week. Remember that your objectives should be to:

1) Have the time to spend on those activities you feel are most important.

2) Have the time to spend on accomplishing your goals.

3) Eliminate wasting time.

4) Feel more in control of your time and your life.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE #1

	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
6	get ready for work						
7	commute to work, get started						Family, church, relaxation
8							
9						Family, household chores	
10							
11	W O R K						
12							
1							Afternoon or evening: 3 hours of study to be finished by 10:00
2						Fit in 2 hours of study, depending on schedule	
3							
4							
5	c o m m u t e h o m e						
6	dinner and family time						
7	Class & commute both ways	Family time	Class & commute both ways.	Family time	Time with friends, family; relax		
8							
9		Study		Study			
10							
11							Relax
	S L E E P						

SAMPLE SCHEDULE #2

	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
6	Get family up and out to work & school					Household chores, laundry, chauffeur kids to soccer, etc. Spouse helps. Fit in 3 hours of study	Relax, Church Family Afternoon or evening fit in 4 hours of study
7							
8		housework & laundry					
9	Commute		Commute		Commute		
10	3 Classes		3 Classes	Study at school library	3 Classes		
11							
12							
1	Lunch with friends, students	Study at home	Lunch with friends, students		Lunch with friends, students		
2							
3	Meet children after school Prepare dinner						
4							
5							
6	Dinner and family time						
7	Family time	Class & commute both ways (spouse cleans up from dinner & puts children to bed)	Family time Relax	Family time	Family, Friends, Relax	Family, friends, fun.	
8							
9	Study			Study			
10							
11	Relax			Relax			

S L E E P

	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
1							
2							
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9							
10							
11							

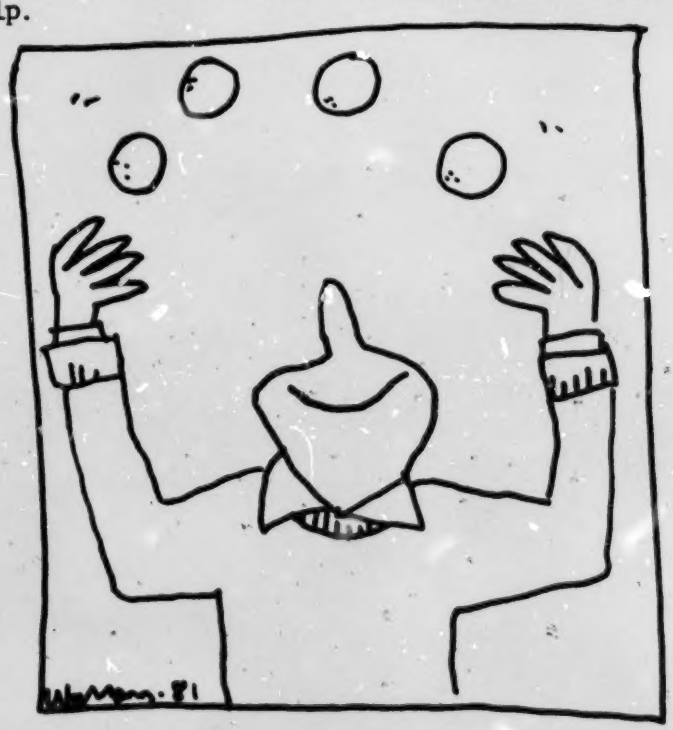
D. Unforeseen time takers

Your best laid plans will inevitably have to be altered to respond to everyday situations that arise. When your son comes home and announces that he has been invited to a birthday party tomorrow, this may involve your getting and wrapping a present and chauffeuring him back and forth. When your boss asks you to stay after work or when a project you are working on has to be finished, your plans for study that night may go out the window. When your husband announces that he is bringing business associates home for dinner, when your child comes home with a fever, when your car breaks down, you have to adjust your schedule. Here are just a few of the things that may take you away from your schedule.

- Illness in family
- Car trouble
- Home equipment breakdowns
- Children's school problems
- Overtime at work
- Weather conditions
- Family obligations
- Children's medical and dental appointments
- Pressure on the job
- Last minute social obligations
- Children's activity demands: soccer, ballet, music lessons, etc.

The important thing for you to remember is that these things will happen and that you need enough flexibility in your schedule to accommodate them. You should, however, make it known to members of your family that your school is a high priority and some adjustments on their part may have to be made. It may be more important to keep a goal of being able to devote a certain amount of time to your studies during the week rather than specific hours in a daily schedule.

However, if you can schedule class and study time during hours when you are less likely to be confronted by unforeseen time takers, this may be of help.



E. Procrastination and Time Wasting

These are problems which often confront college students but which you may consider to be a type of luxury if you are already trying to juggle work, family, and school responsibilities. Nevertheless, it is important not to fall into a pattern of putting things off, of delaying required

school work until a later date. This is rather easy to do if you have many other demands on your time which seem more immediate than your studies. Try to keep your priorities and goals in sight as you make decisions about how you will use your time. Try not to get into a pattern of blaming others for not getting to your school work. Don't confuse legitimate with fabricated reasons for delay. You will have to expect set-backs from time to time which may even cause an adjustment in your courseload. However, if you can set some goals, try to meet them and regularly evaluate how you are doing and what changes you need to make, you can maintain more effective control over your time.

In the space below, write down some of the things that keep coming up and taking you away from what you need to do.

Now write in the space below some of the actions you might be able to take to combat these time-takers.

III. READING

Perhaps the most important skill in achieving academic success is reading. It is a part of your life, on the job, at home, and at school. Most academic work requires reading, and the better you read, the better your chances are for success. Most people do not work on improving their reading skills. It may be worthwhile to take a reading test at your local college so that you can evaluate your reading speed and comprehension. Reading courses are often available and taking a reading course can be an extremely worthwhile investment of your time and money. The following are guidelines for the improvement of your reading skills.

A. Reading habits

1) Try not to vocalize words with your lips, throat or in your mind as you read them. This slows down your reading speed and diminishes your understanding of the material. Try to move your eyes continually forward, taking in more than one word at a time.

2) Try to focus on phrases or short lines in the material you are reading and try not to let your eyes go back over words. If you read more quickly with less retracting, your comprehension will improve.

3) Adapt your reading speed to the material. You should not read everything at the same rate. Some material, such as a textbook, requires much more concentration than other material, such as a magazine article, which you can skim for major points.

4) Try to read at least 15-30 minutes every day. You can improve your reading skills through practice.

5) Measure yourself against the following norms. Average readers have a reading speed for light material of 250-350 words per minute. For medium to difficult material the average is 200-250 words per minute, and for difficult material, 100-150 words per minute.

6) If you experience eye fatigue, blurred words, or if your eyes itch or sting after you have been reading for a while, have your eyes checked. You may need glasses or a change in your prescription if you already wear glasses.

B. Expand your vocabulary

1) Always have a dictionary nearby while you read. Use glossaries in books and use the dictionary to look up words with which you are not familiar.

2) Maintain a list of new words that you come across, find out their meaning, and then make a point to use them as soon as you can.

3) Work on understanding the origin of words and learn general principles for identifying the meaning of words. Make the learning and use of new words an enjoyable game.

C. Choose the proper setting for reading

1) Try to choose a place to read where you will not be interrupted. Hold the book at a slant about 15 inches from your eyes.

2) Read where you have the proper lighting and minimize outside noises such as TV or radio.

3) Usually read while sitting in an upright position in a comfortable chair. Lying down or reading in bed may put you to sleep.

IV. READING TEXTBOOKS

Although there are many ways to read a textbook, the primary thing to remember is that you do not read it in the same way that you read a newspaper, novel, or magazine. A textbook must be read in a more organized, thoughtful manner to increase your retention and understanding of the material in the book. The following are recommendations on how to read and study a textbook.

A. SQ3R

A common approach to reading textbooks is the SQ3R method, which refers to the five steps of survey, question, read, recite, and review. This method will help you to choose the important material to be learned, to understand the subject matter, to retain this understanding, and to apply the knowledge learned. The primary goal of using this method is to keep you actively involved in studying a textbook so that you don't end up reading the same sentence over and over without really learning or remembering anything.

1) Survey - Look through the entire book (or chapter). Go over the table of contents and the index and read the introduction. The introduction often gives you an idea of the author's purpose in writing the book and the approach to the material. Notice chapter headings and subheadings and summaries at the end of chapters. Look at the last chapter or the last few pages, as the author will usually summarize the major points of the book.

2) Question - There may be questions at the end of the chapters which will help you to read the material more effectively. If not, ask yourself what the author is trying to get across. Imagine you are having a discussion with the author. What is the meaning of the title of a chapter? Why are the ideas presented in the order chosen by the author? How effective is the author in getting the major points across? For whom is the author writing and when was the book written? Are some of the ideas now out of date? Questioning is perhaps the most crucial step and can improve your comprehension by as much as 50 percent. Questioning adds a sense of purpose to learning and actively involves you in the reading and comprehension of the material.

3) Read - Read for the purpose of answering the questions you have asked. Try to determine what the author's main ideas are in any chapter. Before you read each chapter, preview it first, noting the chapter headings and subheadings and the organization of the material. Your reading should be an active, searching process as you seek to make sense of the material. Underline key statements in the book, but try not to underline whole sentences. Underline only after you have completed a section or paragraph, so that you have the entire idea before you begin to underline. Write notes in the margins drawing attention to particular points, disagreeing with others, and putting concepts in your own language.

4) Recite - Most people forget at least 50 percent of the material they have read as soon as they finish reading it. In order to help your learning and retention of the material, it is necessary to summarize periodically. This can be done orally or by writing notes on the material. Test yourself and go back to read over portions that are unclear. You may wish to go back to sections about which you have new questions. Recitation increases the amount you remember and the length of time you will retain the material. Recite before moving to a new section.

5) Review - If you have made notes on the material as a part of the recitation process, review is much easier. Go over the ideas you have underlined and any comments you have made in the book. Try to recall the major points of a chapter. Make review a systematic process so that you can maintain your retention of the material. Review periodically as you read a book or progress through a course. Avoid waiting until exams before you pick up a book to review it. Ask yourself questions about each chapter and try to keep the information and ideas fresh in your mind.

B. Helpful hints

Here are some additional hints that may be of use to you in reading textbooks.

1) When you make notes on a textbook, first read a paragraph; then close the book, think about the major ideas, and write them down in your own words without looking at the book. If you simply copy sentences from the book, you will not understand or retain the material as well as if you write the notes in your own words.

2) Look at the index. Note which words appear frequently. This can serve as a clue to concepts which the author considers to be very important.

3) When you are underlining in your textbook, try to make the words underlined form a phrase or a complete concept. Do not underline whole sentences, but try to form phrases that illustrate major ideas. This will add to your retention of the material.

4) Read the summaries of chapters first. While this may seem to be a backward approach, it does help you to better understand what you will be reading.

5) When you are reading a textbook, do it in a setting that is comfortable for the purpose of study. Experiment and find out what kind of conditions are best for you. Try to minimize distractions and avoid situations that are too relaxing. You cannot expect to study effectively under the same conditions that you read a magazine or newspaper.

6) If there are exercises at the end of a chapter, do them. They will help you to review and to retain the information.

7) Write a short summary of each chapter in your own words.

8) Pay particular attention to graphic material. Tables, maps, charts, graphs, and drawings help to reinforce your understanding of the text.

V. LISTENING AND NOTE-TAKING

You will probably have many classes in which the instructor will lecture and you will be expected to remember the major points of what has been said. Good listening and note-taking skills can help you to keep up with the progress of the class and can make it much easier to prepare for exams. Here are some suggestions for improving your listening and note-taking skills.

A. Prepare for your class

It can be helpful to "warm up" before going into a class where you will be taking notes. Here are some hints on how to prepare for a class.

1) Read the assignment, if there was one, before the class meets. The lecture may be related to the reading assignment and if you have not read it, you may have considerable difficulty understanding what the instructor is talking about.

2) Check your course outline so that you have an idea of the topics to be covered and how they fit into the course.

3) Review your notes from the last class.

4) Arrive at class a bit early and relax for a few minutes. This will also allow you time to get organized for the class.

5) Attempt to get to know some of your classmates. You may be able to learn a good deal from them, share things with them, and receive assistance when you need it.

6) Sit near the front of the classroom, particularly if it is large.

7) If you have questions about the topic, be prepared to ask them. You may want to formulate them in advance and even write them down.

B. Taking notes in class

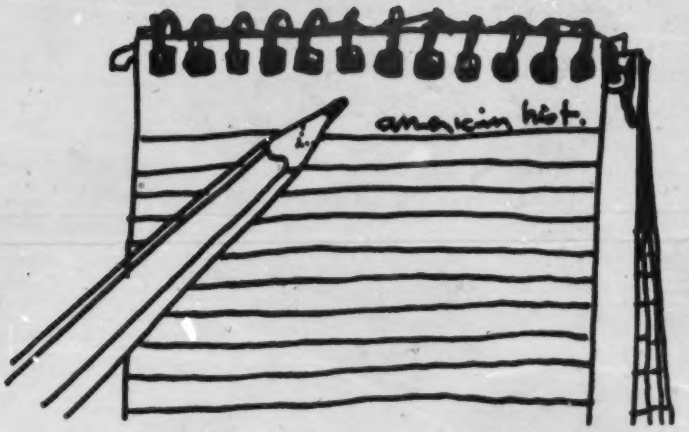
There is no one "right" way to take notes, but here are some general guidelines to follow.

1) Remember that notes should serve as reminders of the major points that are covered in the lecture and that it is not necessary to write everything down.

2) Listen critically. Try to identify the important ideas. Most lectures are planned around a core of important ideas.

3) Question continuously, whether or not you ask them aloud. Organize your notetaking around your questions.

4) Try to look at the organization of the material as a whole with all its relationships and interconnected parts. Put your notes in logical, outline form.



5) Make your notes brief and use whatever form of shorthand or abbreviation you feel comfortable with. Try to refrain from writing long paragraphs. Number the major points and make the notes as clear as possible.

6) Watch for key words. Many lecturers use key words to emphasize major points. Some examples of key words are:

remember that...
for example...
most importantly...
as a result...

If the lecturer draws attention to a particular point, write it down and underline it, or use another symbol to draw attention to it.

7) When a lecturer goes too fast, leave space and fill in the details later.

8) When you make a mistake, don't erase it. Simply draw a line through it, since this saves time and you may in fact want the information later on.

9) Be an active member of the class. Participate in classroom discussions and listen to what people are saying. Keep your attention on the instructor.

C. Use of your notes after class

When you leave your class, your notes can be valuable to you if you do the following:

1) Review your notes while the class is still fresh in your mind and clarify and rewrite those portions that need it.

2) Prior to your next class, read your notes from the preceding class. This will help to prepare for the next class and aid in your retention of the material previously learned.

3) Keep your notes handy and well-organized so that you can easily and logically review when you begin to study for an exam.

VI. CONCENTRATION

Four out of five students feel that concentration is the number one study problem. In their attempt to study effectively, many students think about concentrating so much that it breaks their concentration. The fear of failure can prevent you from being able to concentrate effectively. One way to deal with these concerns is to understand what the blocks are to good concentration.

A. Blocks to concentration

1) External distractions - Interruptions from family, friends, and fellow students, phone calls, conversations, and uncontrollable noise can all reduce your ability to concentrate.

2) Internal distractions - If you have family problems, pressures from your job, time deadlines to meet, or other personal problems, your power of concentration may be diminished.

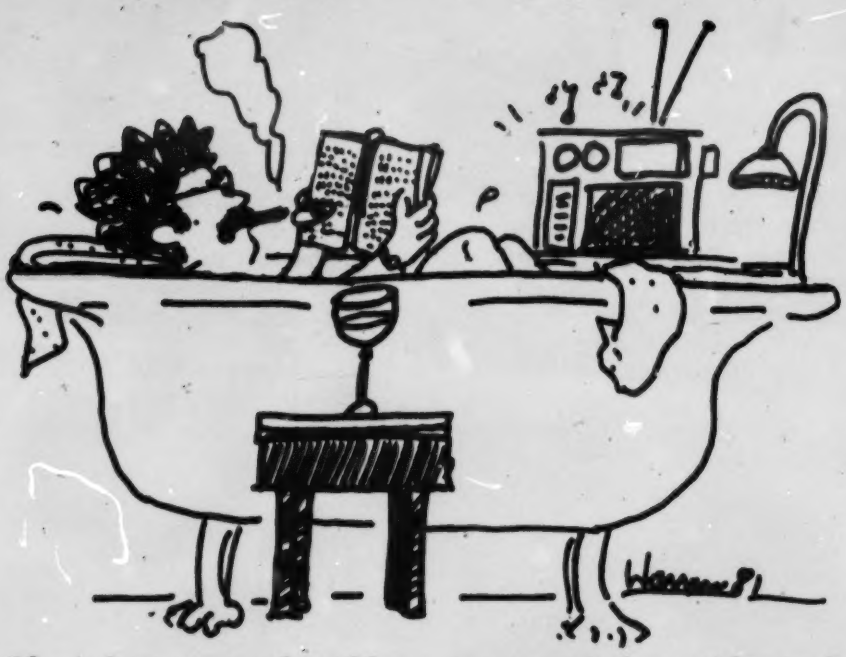
3) Physical and mental fatigue - If you are overtired, you may tend to fall asleep or may be unable to keep focusing on the work to be done.

4) Lack of interest - It is much more difficult to concentrate on a topic in which you have little interest.

5) Do you often have trouble concentrating? If so, what seem to be some of the reasons why you cannot concentrate on certain things?

B. Suggestions for improving concentration

1) Remind yourself why you are working on this topic. Look at it in relationship to your overall goals, and see how it fits in.



2) If you have personal problems, try to set them aside, at least for the hour or two that you need to concentrate. If you have difficulty doing this, you may need to resolve some of these problems before you can effectively concentrate. Seek counseling assistance if you need help.

3) Organize what has to be done before you actually sit down to study.

4) If you have outside noise that is bothersome, try playing soft background music to drown out that noise.

5) Find a comfortable place that meets your needs. Don't try to study with the TV on or where other people are talking. Sit upright, have good lighting, and study in a setting that has few outside distractions.

6) Work on a schedule with specific goals. If you are studying more than one course, try not to study similar courses right after each other. Break them up with a different kind of subject.

7) Contract with yourself for a payoff. After you have completed a couple of hours of productive study, reward yourself with something you can look forward to.

8) Avoid getting into conversations that may tend to go on and on. If you are likely to be drawn into conversations with others, find a place to concentrate on your work where you don't know anyone else.

9) Get enough sleep and don't try to concentrate on something when you are overtired.

10) Get some kind of physical exercise on a regular basis. When you are studying, take breaks, get up and walk around.

11) If you have a number of things to do, make a list. By writing things down, it will be easier for you to set some of these aside and clear your mind so that you can concentrate on one piece of work.

VII. MEMORY

A major objective in reading and study is to remember what you have learned. It is very frustrating to try to recall something that you thought you had learned well, but be unable to do so. This can be particularly damaging if it occurs during an examination. There is no substitute for time in the memorization process, and there are no short cuts. It is essential that you keep a positive mental attitude toward the material you are attempting to retain and toward your ability to remember it. You can definitely help yourself to remember what you have learned by using certain techniques, which are given in this section. First, however, it is helpful to look at why people forget information.

A. Why people forget

1) Lack of use of the information - If you do not use the information learned, the facts, ideas, and skills will gradually leave you as time passes. Your ability to recall something is related to the amount of time since you had exposure to or used the information. The greater the time span, the less you will remember.

2) Interference from other information - Learning new material will tend to make you forget material learned previously, especially if the new material is similar to that which you learned before. Also, if you originally learned some information that was incorrect, it may interfere with your ability to remember material that was learned subsequently.

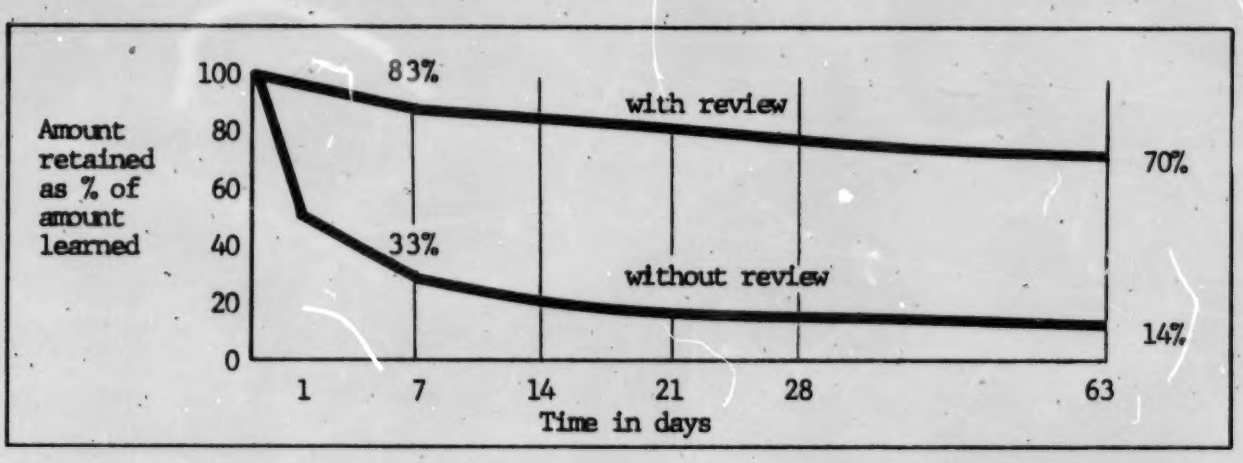
3) Blocking out information - You tend to remember selectively, accepting what is consistent with your interests and opinions and rejecting what does not fit into your own expectations. It is important whether you have a positive or negative attitude toward your learning situation. If you have a positive attitude, you are an active participant in your learning. If you have a negative attitude, you are not as involved and will not retain the material as well. If you expect a lecture or reading assignment to be dull, you will probably forget much of it.

4) Incomplete learning of information - If you do not learn something well in the first place, you will not be able to recall it well later on. It's very common to have a lapse in memory due to your not having completely learned the material in the first place. If you are in a hurry to finish an assignment, you may not learn the material sufficiently to be able to recall it accurately at a later time.

B. Suggestions for improving memory

1) Review material - Most forgetting occurs immediately after initial learning, so it is important to reflect and review the material right after you have learned it. This will help to set the

information in your mind and you can continue to keep the information current by reviewing the material periodically. The following chart illustrates how review can help memory.[1]



2) Recall material - One minute spent in immediate recall after learning something nearly doubles retention, but don't stop here. Review over several sessions in order to firmly set the information in your mind by keeping the information current and active.

3) Overlearn - Once you have recalled something accurately, don't stop there. Keep studying beyond the point where you have good recall, as overlearning is an excellent way to improve your retention of hard to remember material. There is a point of diminishing returns, however, so stop when you feel you've had enough.

4) Understand the material - Make sure that you have a good understanding of the material, since you will remember it much better if it is meaningful to you. Try to learn the general principles before you attempt to memorize facts. Organize your materials in a logical and meaningful way.

5) Make meaningful associations - You tend to remember most clearly what you consciously or unconsciously associate with something known to you. An association will remind you and will assist you in recollecting information.

6) Use mnemonic devices - When you can associate key words, symbols, sentences, rhymes, and other formulas with a complex principle or body of fact, this can help you to remember. However, be careful that you do not ignore the basic meaning of what you are learning. There is a danger of simply focusing on the phrase or rhyme without really understanding the information. In addition, the slightest error in a rhyme will throw you off. Examples of mnemonic devices: "Thirty days hath September, April, June and November..."; to remember the colors of the rainbow, "ROY G. BIV" (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet).

[1]Pauk, Walter. How to Study in College. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974, p. 72.

7) Use flash cards - Put information on one side of a card with a key word or question on the other. Shuffle the cards and go through them, testing yourself on your recall of the information. This may be better than remembering facts from a list, as you tend to remember things sequentially but can throw yourself off if you forget one part of the sequence.

8) Vary study periods - If you study often for short periods of time rather than intensively over a long period of time, you will improve your retention. However, don't make the study sessions too short. They should be long enough to be productive and to allow for good concentration on the subject.

9) Keep restating things - If you repeat ideas in your own words or write ideas down, you will have a much easier time remembering later on. This is particularly helpful when you will be required to write about information and ideas on a test.

10) Try to be objective - If you develop negative feelings about the material, you may tend to block it out. You should be aware of this problem, and must attempt to separate your own biases and beliefs from the concepts and facts you are studying.

VIII. TEST TAKING

Most courses require tests of some kind. Courses in which you take a large number of short tests do not create as much anxiety as when you have just one or two tests for the entire course. Proper study and preparation can help you to decrease anxiety and to be more successful on tests. There are also several things to remember about how to take the different types of tests. Basically, there are three types of tests:

1) objective - which includes any one or combination of true-false, matching, completion, chronological and short answer items.

2) essay - where you are asked to compare, contrast, trace, or discuss a topic.

3) problem - where you are asked to solve mathematical, scientific or other problems.

This section of the academic survival skills booklet will help you to improve your test-taking and test preparation skills. It includes how to prepare for a test, how to deal with test anxiety, and how to take the three different types of tests.

A. How to prepare for a test

1) Use the reading, concentration, and memory techniques described in this workbook.

2) Find out what the instructor plans to cover on the test. If you are unsure, ask the instructor for clarification during or after class.

3) Study for the type of test that you will take.

   a) If it is to be an objective test, you will need to concentrate on memorizing factual material, dates, formulas, etc.

   b) If it is to be an essay test, concentrate on understanding general principles, theories, and concepts.

   c) If it is to be a problem-solving test, prepare by working out sample problems similar to those that you expect to encounter on the test.

4) Plan your study and schedule so that the night before a test, all you have to do is review the material you have already learned.

5) Review with a group of classmates if you know it will be supportive, but don't substitute this for study on your own. Limit the group to 4 or 5 people and don't participate if other members of the group tend to increase your anxiety.

6) Try to predict test questions, based on what you know about your instructor's teaching techniques and philosophy.

B. How to deal with test anxiety

1) Remember that some anxiety is good. It gets you "up" for the test.

2) Don't cram the night before. Get a good night's sleep. You want your reactions to be sharp, and fatigue will decrease your effectiveness.

3) On the day of the test, allow plenty of time for your morning routine. Try not to rush. Read the paper and do your other business. Review a bit if you wish, but not too much. Take time out for breakfast and for relaxation.

4) Plan to get to the test room a few minutes early. If there are any possibilities of traffic problems or other delays, take these into consideration and leave early.

5) Avoid last minute "panic" groups. They can make you nervous and will needlessly increase your anxiety. If you talk with others before the test, don't talk about the test.

6) It's better if you leave your notes and texts at home. By this time you should have studied enough, and last minute review right before the test may confuse you and will probably do more harm than good.

7) Go to the room where you're taking the test around five minutes early. Make yourself comfortable and have sufficient supplies. Bring with you a good pen that writes well.

8) Choose a good seat in an area where there will be the fewest distractions. If your neighbor starts to talk about the test, talk about the weather.

9) If you draw a blank, don't submit to panic. Sit quietly and try to relax. Put your pen down for a while. If the ideas don't come right away, move on to the next part of the test. When you return to this section, you may by that time have remembered most of the material.

10) If you are overcome by severe anxiety, try to remember that it is just one test. Nothing terrible will happen to you. Talk with your instructor. It may be possible to take the test later. Look at why you are upset. Were you not properly prepared or are you concerned that the test will not allow you to show how much you really know? You may be attaching too much importance to one test.

C. How to take an objective test

1) If there is a separate answer sheet, occasionally make sure that the test page and answer sheet numbers match.

2) Go through the questions quickly and answer those you are sure of. Work through the test again to answer the more difficult questions.

3) On true-false tests, go through and answer all of the items of which you are certain, then go back over the test and answer those for which you have some idea of the right answer. Then mark all of the other items false.

4) On multiple choice tests, read all of the options and answer those of which you are certain. Go back over each unanswered question and eliminate the options that you know are wrong. Then guess from the remaining options. This increases the probability of your guessing the right option.

5) On completion (fill in the blank) question, write in something, even if you are not sure of the answer.

6) Don't look for hidden meanings in the questions on an objective test.

7) Try to think as your instructor would.

8) Do not spend too much time on any one item.

9) Pay attention to key words. Terms such as always, all, or never tend to eliminate the option. Terms such as usually, most, some, or may, often indicate a positive option.

10) Look for information in some test questions that may help you to answer other questions.

11) Look out for multiple ideas in the same true-false statement. All parts of the statement must be true or the entire statement is false.

12) Usually your first response to an objective item is the most accurate. Feel free to change your answers, if you can convince yourself that your first answer was wrong. If you're not sure, stay with your first answer.

D. How to take an essay test

1) Read the questions and underline the key words. Look for the type of response the instructor is requesting. The three types of responses most often requested are:

a) compare and contrast
b) trace the development of
c) discuss

Be sure to answer all parts of the question.

2) While reading the questions, write next to each question whatever notes or comments or facts that come up in your mind. Read and brainstorm all of the questions before you begin to write your first answer.

3) Plan your use of time. Base your allocation of time on the number of points given for each answer. Don't let yourself spend too much time answering any one question.

4) Answer the easiest question first. This will give you a sense of accomplishment and will reduce your anxiety.

5) Make a brief, logical outline before you begin to write. This helps you to organize your answer and to keep it to the points you want to cover.

6) When responding in a paragraph or two, have an introductory sentence, give at least three examples, and have a concluding sentence. When comparing and contrasting, write about one item at a time, then the other, then compare, citing similarities and differences. Don't weave back and forth. Write in a logical sequence.

7) Avoid being too verbose. Get to the point and provide as much information as you can. Include factual details whenever you can in order to make your point and to show that you know the material.

8) Be neat. Make sure you have a good pen and write legibly. Don't try to erase. Cross something out if you don't want to include it. Instructors tend to reward neat papers in their grading procedures.

9) Leave space at the end of each answer so that you can add something later on if you wish. Re-read the answer and make appropriate additions.

10) If you have a question that you don't think you can answer, leave it until the end and then try to write something. You may at least get some partial credit.

11) Check your answers for grammar, omissions, spelling, accuracy, and punctuation. If you correct small errors, you can often raise your grade.

E. How to take a problem test

1) When you work on a problem in math, science, or a similar subject, turn in your work even though you think your answer is wrong. You may get partial credit.

2) Show all the steps in your work and clearly identify your answer.

3) Work a problem in a different way, if possible, to re-check your answer.

4) If you are working with formulas that are hard to remember, write these down first so that you can refer to them and won't forget them.

5) If you are unable to work out a problem, leave it and return to it later.

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